

Taking Back the Specialty – Game On!

by **Char Eash**

If you haven't noticed, being recognized as an orthodontic specialist and retaining the market share as an orthodontist has become more and more challenging. The end result and the process of creating a beautiful smile that is also functional have always driven orthodontists to not compromise with patient care, technology, and education. It is just unfortunate that a general dentist can do orthodontics in a six month period and not really worry about occlusion but rather focus on what the consumer wants: the front teeth aligned, braces on the teeth in as little time as possible, and less cost! Oh, and throw in the fact that the insurance companies love the lower benefits being paid out to policy holders on behalf of the non-specialist! All this adds up to the orthodontic specialty being challenged to project the difference with the level of patient care they provide and the benefit of choosing this specialty!

I work with great practices coast to coast and the question that is asked on a daily basis is, "How can we promote the specialty of orthodontics and take back the market share?" The question that really should be asked is, "Why should the consumer choose your practice?" As I have worked in orthodontics over the past 20 years I have viewed how careful the orthodontist is not to upset the referring dentists. Orthodontic practices spend thousands of dollars to market to the general dentist, yet the referring dentist now competes for the orthodontic patients. My advice to my clients or any orthodontist seeking to grow their practice is to make sure we have the systems in place to shout from the rooftops what an orthodontic specialist is and what that means to the consumer! Game on!

Growing the orthodontic practice is not about gimmicks! It is about how your service stacks up and how the service you provide is communicated to the consumer.

Focus the Practice

Let's begin with the orthodontic team. The doctor will need to lead the team into action from the top. Leading the orthodontic team must begin with optimism! Optimism is contagious and brings a positive spin to the design of the business plan. If the practice is in the survival mode with no positive game plan, whether in effect of the

economy or the competition, the focus is not being placed on the possibilities for the future. Any

great business has a business plan that is reevaluated as the business changes. The purpose and direction of the practice must be clear to all team members. People want to be a part of something that is moving in a direction. A great leader is persistent and will make sure the team is excited about the action of growing the practice under any circumstance.

Nothing is status quo! Communication of the specialty begins with the team understanding how each job design plays a part in welcoming the consumer into the practice. First the team will need to be well trained and work well together. I recommend that my doctors choose their team and surround themselves with people they enjoy working with. There is no room on an orthodontic team to have people who do not participate at the highest level and follow the rules and policies set by the office. Any great company is only as strong as their weakest link. I have seen great team members give up their own creativity

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because of the lack of consequences delivered by the leadership when insubordination exists. Establish a team that understands the importance of working together and making each other better people on a day to day basis.

Job Descriptions Important, Too

Job designs should be reviewed on an annual basis. This is an easy process! Have each team member list the tasks they are responsible for, and then have them prioritize that list.

When I evaluate these task lists I ask three questions of my team members:

1. How do these tasks listed that you perform on a daily basis contribute to cultivating a positive patient experience?
2. How do these tasks contribute to the efficiency and profitability of the practice?
3. What opportunities from your job design do you have on a daily basis to ask for referrals? Each job design should contribute to creating a positive environment for the consumer while promoting the end result of a beautiful and functional smile.

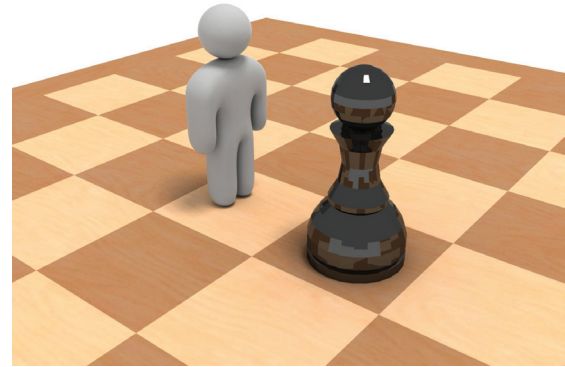
Welcoming New Patients

Let's welcome the consumer to the practice while promoting the orthodontic specialty! This system consists of two parts: the new patient telephone call and the initial exam process.

The initial telephone call should be scripted – yes scripted! Not everyone taking this call is equipped to promote the practice off the cuff. Utilize a telephone slip that welcomes the patient to the practice, promotes your family care program, and speaks to the fact that many families have placed their confidence in the doctor and team. The initial telephone call is a screening tool to set your practice apart from the pack. The new patient telephone process should be designed to grow the practice. Growing the orthodontic practice is not about gimmicks! It is about how your service stacks up and how the service you provide is communicated to the consumer.

The new patient exam is the second part of the initial process to introduce the patient to the specialty. With all the technology available to the orthodontic practice today

the simple advantage of great communication and treating the new patient as a guest in your office will continue to increase your conversion rates. Greeting the patient in the reception area by their first name, coming around the desk



to demonstrate the sign-in computer, introducing the team and the practice by facilitating a "Wow" office tour all contribute to the consumer feeling comfortable with the fact they have chosen the right practice. During the new patient exam diagram on the photos, present a motivating treatment plan letter welcoming the patient to the team, and make it easy for the consumer to do business with your practice by being confident with financial options. Share before and after photos of similar cases with the patient or parents testimonials attached. All these systems add up to taking back the market share by promoting the specialty.

These are just a few systems that need to be in place to promote the specialty of orthodontics. Grow your orthodontic practice today. Take back the specialty through every communication in your practice. Game on! ♡

About the Author



Char Eash is the founder and CEO of Profit Marketing Systems South, inc., a Systems and Communication Enhancement firm for the progressive Orthodontic practice. She will be presenting two courses the 2012 Users Group Meeting in San Diego.